**First Period Purgatory**

**By Haley Tynes**

I’ve never really liked kids pass the age of seven. So when my mom asked me to substitute for one of the teachers at her high school, I was more than a bit wary.

“It’s an easy fifty bucks.”

My mother was fantastic at persuading people.

I was subbing for my old teacher Coach Davis. I honestly didn’t know the woman was still teaching. The same subject too; World History. When I walked into her class room on Friday nothing had changed. The same world map decorated the right wall, pictures of different countries plastered around it. The T.V. sat in the corner, the wooden cabinets still in the back; the last door on the left still broken. The only thing that looked out of place was the desks, which were smaller than I remembered.

I was happy to see she left a two page worksheet for the class to work on. I really didn’t want to read anything out loud today. In fact, the less I have to talk to the kids, the better.

I twirled slowly in Coach Davis’s seat and played on my cell phone. I listened as the halls got louder as the clock slowly approached eight. The bell rang and the sounds of lockers slamming echoed throughout the empty room. I never realized how loud those metals doors were and frankly I didn’t miss it.

When the first student walked in, a boy taller than me by probably six inches, I greeted him pleasantly. “Hello! How are you today?”

He stopped abruptly and gave me the oddest look. “Who are you?”

“I am the substitute teacher for today, Miss Haley, Miss Tynes’s daughter.”

“No way. You look like your fifteen.”

My face fell, confidence crumpling into nothingness. “I’m twenty two.” I replied lamely. The student had stopped paying attention to me, his small attention span catching his friend walking into the class room.

I sat there and sulked in silence as more of the class trickled in. I played around with some of the paper on Coach Davis’s desk, stacking them neatly and trying to look important. I waited until the tardy bell rang before I introduced myself. I stood up straight and squared my shoulders as I spoke to them, trying to look like a respectable adult.

“How old are you?” Another student asked while I was in mid introduction from one of the back rows.

“Twenty two.” I failed at hiding the irritation in voice.

“You look a lot younger.”

“Let’s take role then shall we?”

I took the row, the students saying monotone responses to their name being called. Taking the advice of the mother, I also did a head count making sure the number of heads matched up with the number of people that were here.

I counted fourteen heads and frowned. Only thirteen students were present. I scanned the roster. Twice. I counted heads again. Still fourteen. Fantastic.

“Is there some one’s name I didn’t call?” I looked out onto vacant stares. “Because I am counting an extra person.”

“Oh!” A sweet voice exclaimed from the front row. “You probably forgot me. I am technically not in this class. I am doing make up work for Coach Davis.” The girl smiled brightly at me, her blonde hair bouncing in the high pony tail on top of her head.

She seemed sweet enough. “Okay, well do you have a note from your teacher?” I said with a smile.

“No, but I do this every day.”

My smile slipped a little. “Well that’s great but Coach Davis didn’t write a note, so I’m not really sure what to believe.”

Like a switch the sweet voice was gone replaced with a hard, bitter tone. “Well coach Davis and I have an arrangement.”

My eyebrows shot up. Before I could say anything else another student joined in, defending the girl. “Yeah she’s been doing this for like a week. It’s not a big deal.”

*Did I ask you?* I shot him a look but clearly it wasn’t frightening as other students in the class began to chime in, protecting this girl like I was about to haul her off to the gallows.

“Alright!” I finally said, trying hard not to shout. I looked at the girl with what I hope was a stern glare and put as much authority in my voice as I could. “You can stay in here, but I am leaving a note to Coach Davis about this.”

She gave a nasty laugh, rolled her eyes, and started digging through her backpack. She looked at the girl behind her and whispered loudly, “Can you believe her?!”

*“Listen here bitch,” I say to her watching that snarky look on her face fall. “I am at least five years older than you so loosen that training bra of yours and shape up because no one is impressed.” Then I am fired and will never be able to work with children again.*

I exhaled slowly through my nose and scribbled down a note for Coach Davis on a yellow legal pad on her desk. I make sure to write specifically about Miss Mary Sunshine’s attitude towards me.

The class settled and I gave them the home work their teacher assigned for them- a worksheet that had to be completed by the end of class. There was a small collected groan from the students and luckily that was it. I handed the worksheet to everyone holding back a comment when I passed the girl making up homework.

*“Another thing to make up I guess! Tee Hee!”*

**FIRED.**

As I sat down at the desk the door open. A girl strode into the classroom- about ten minutes late I noticed- her flip flops smacking loudly on the floor. Her brown hair was pulled into a frizzy bun, and her clothes rumpled as though she had slept in them. Dark sunglasses framed her face.

I frowned, my suspicions growing. When I arrived at school this morning it had been cloudy outside. Looking out the class window it still appeared so. So why was this girl still wearing sunglasses?

Hangover crossed my mind before I could stop myself.

“Excuse me.” I said in a low voice, stopping her as she passed my desk. “Who are you?”

“Jessica Thompson.”

“Okay Jessica,” I looked at the roster and was relieved to see she was in this class. “Can you please tell my why you were late.”

She stared at me before responding. “I was with the counselor.”

“Oh okay, I understand” my voice grew sympathetic. “Do you have a note from the counselor I could have?”

“No.” She seemed almost disgusted by the question.

I blinked. “Oh, well. Here’s what I’ll do. I’ll call down to the counselor’s office and ask her if you were down there, then I can write a note for Coach Davis.” I mean I had already marked the girl absent and I wasn’t going to change it. Coach Davis would be fine with the note.

Apparently my kind gesture was taken completely opposite of how I thought it would be. She scoffed at me, her eyebrows dipping behind her glasses in a frown. “You know what just mark me tardy; it would be stupid to go through all that trouble.” She practically shouted at me, causing the rest of the class to look up. She then turned and marched to her desk flip flops smacking the entire way.

I stared, my mouth opening and closing stupidly. But, I was just trying to help her out. I knew how strict the tardy policy is here. You only get three before you have after school detention. I didn’t want her to have a tardy if she really-

Realization dawned at me. She wasn’t in the counselor’s office. The little bitch just tried to lie to me. And I caught her in the act! Hah!

The girl turned to the boy behind her, apparently filling him in on what happened. By the look on their faces I could tell she was painting her self the victim of the story.

“Please stop talking. You guys have homework to do.” That statement earned me two venomous glares and an eye rolls.

*“Excuse me Miss, could you take off your sunglasses as well? Or will the florescent light bother your hangover too much?”*

**FIRED.**

Why the hell did I agree to this?

I bit my lip to keep from talking and wrote the girl a tardy slip. It gave me more satisfaction then it should have.

The students seemed to relax and for about ten minutes everything seemed alright. They began working begrudgingly on the worksheet. I could hear a few mutters, some working together on the home work. I didn’t mind. I was just thankful that I had managed to settle them down.

A sound of a coke can popping open echoed through the class. I looked up, watching as some of the kids pulled different kinds of snack food and sodas out of their backpacks and purses. I glanced sideways to the sign on the blackboard. It was written in large red print: NO FOOD OR DRINK IN THE CLASS.

I sighed, dragging a hand across my face. This morning…

“Okay guys,” I said, making my voice as friendly as I could. “You can see the sign in the front. It says no food or drink in class. So let’s respect the sign and please put them up. You can wait till the bell rings to eat.”

The temperature in the room dropped about ten degrees. They halted there movements, tension building in their overly active, hormonal little bodies. Their eyes seemed to darken instantly and I could have sworn that there was a red tint in them.

Oh shit.

A bomb seemed to detonate in the class room, the students shouting at me all at once.

“What do you mean we can’t eat?!”

“Coach Davis always lets us eat. It’s really not that big of a deal!”

“I’m just following what the sign says you guys.”

“That’s bull!”

“Coach Davis doesn’t care!”

“Well I-”

“We never follow the sign. It’s really not that big of a deal! Why don’t you just chill out and let us eat!”

“You’re making a big deal out of nothing!”

I wanted to shout back. *You are the ones freaking out!*

This was ridiculous. Never in all my life has such hostility been directed at me. All of them had deep frowns on their faces, eyes glowering at me like I was some evil dictator that had stripped them of their freedom. I was just following what the signed said. I didn’t put it up there, the teacher did. I am not sacrificing my chance at getting hired for your own personal hunger. Eat breakfast at home you lazy pricks, like a normal person! Don’t blame me if your teacher didn’t leave a note.

Jessica, to my utmost joy, stood up. She walked right up to my desk, big round sunglasses still covering her eyes. She held a donut hole between her two of her chipped, pink nailed fingers. “I am going to eat this donut hole.” She said her voice slow and condescending as if I was too stupid to understand her. Just as slowly as her words, she lifted the sugary bread to her glossed lips and popped it into her mouth. Between her obnoxiously large chews I could see a smile fighting it way across her face.

*I reach over the desk and before she can react I stick my fingers into her wide gaping mouth and rip the chewed food out of her mouth. I throw it down onto the ground beside her loud flip flops and while she’s standing there like a moron I stomp down on the chewed donut hole, grinding it under my boot.*

*I look up at her, smile sweetly and say, “Now you can eat it.”, pick it up and make her eat the contaminated food.*

**FIRED AND ARRESTED.**

I stared back at her, my hand curling into fists under my desk. “Well good for you.” I bit out between my clenched teeth. “Please go sit back down.” *You stupid drunk hussy*, I added silently.

The triumphant sneer finally broke out on her face as she turned, her classmates snickering at her as she proudly sauntered back to her seat. I kept my head down so I could hide the shock and anger on my face. Are you fucking kidding me here? They are encouraging the fact that she just completely and totally disregarded my authority.

“If I hear another word about the food I will send you to the office. Is that clear?”

Angry glares met my gaze. I could practically see my murder mapped out in their eyes. One boy huffed, “This is bull shit.” Many murmured in agreement.

The intercom was attached at to the wall. Only a few steps away to call higher authority and give those pricks exactly what they disserve.

But I had no idea how to work the intercom.

It looked simple enough, but there was some kind of pattern you had to do and I really didn’t want to look stupid in front of these kids. They already see me below their respect. I don’t think I could get out of the class alive if they saw me below their IQ. Yelling at me was one thing. I wouldn’t be able to handle out right laughter.

I wrote Coach Davis another note. This was the third note in a span of twenty minutes. The one page on the yellow legal pad was nearly filled with my scribbled, hate filled hand writing. I was really beginning to resent Coach Davis. The kids won’t give you any trouble my ass! These teenagers were evil.

No, not teenagers; demons. Horrible, blood thirty demons that came from the deepest, darkest pits of hell.

Was I ever this bad of a student? I remember having bad teachers too, but I don’t think I ever just outright disrespected them like this? Especially not at the age of seventeen! I had become at least a little mature by then!

A boy walked up to my desk. He crushed an empty coke can in front of me then threw it in the crash can. The other students laughed as he walked back to his desk.

*I pick up the trash can and throw it at his back, hitting him right between the shoulder blades. “You dropped something!”*

**FIRED, ARRESTED, AND SATISFIED**

I placed my head in my hands. My chest was beginning to feel heavy. I knew I was only one more incident away from having a panic attack. My pills were sitting neatly in my purse, right beside my pepper spray. I didn’t know which one would be of better use at this point.

The talking was increasing, becoming incredibly close to yelling. It seems that the homework had been long sense abandoned. My headache was increasing, my patience thinning. “Guys, settle down and do your homework.”

The noise only grew, their beady little eyes shifting towards me. Someone pointed at me, saying something that only the group could hear. They broke out into uproarious laughter.

I saw red. My breathing came faster and my nostrils flared. The line of sanity and rage was beginning to blur. Without realizing it I was standing, purse in my hand and fingers brushing against my Taser gun. *I’ll give you something to laugh at you stupid little fuc-*

“Coach Davis- oh! Haley! I forgot you were subbing. How are you?”

My fingers froze. I whipped around to see my mother’s friend and co worker Mrs. Berry standing in the doorway.

If I ever doubted that God exist, this was a sign that yes, he was in fact real. A gold light highlighted her body, angel’s horns erupting in the back ground as she walked into the class. The students’ voices seemed to fade at the sight of her. I looked around at the now somber faces of the once little demos. How could she have that power and where can I get some?

“Are you okay?” her eyebrows pulled together in concern. “You look a little upset.”

A hysteric laugh left my lips. I could only imagine what I must look like: Eyes red, face flushed. I sat down in defeat, telling my mother’s friend about my morning- about bi polar homework girl, sunglass bitch, and the crowd of rebels that mindlessly followed them.

The concerned in Mrs. Berry’s eyes quickly vanished into irritation. “Let me handle this.”

“Excuse me,” she said to the class, her tone much firmer. They all stopped what they were doing and looked at her. “Who is the student remaking their homework?”

“Oh my god,” The girl exclaimed, smacking her hand on her desk in annoyance. “This is not a big deal! Coach Davis and I-“

“She is not Coach Davis.” Mrs. Berry said with such a commanding tone that I sat up in attention. The girl’s mouth snapped shut, starring at the older woman with wide eyes. “How could she have possibly known about that? I suggest that you get rid of that attitude right now.” She looked up to the sea of frightened teenagers. “All of you. There is no excuse for your actions. I suggest you get your acts together now! If I hear one more complaint from Haley, you will all be spending the weekend in Saturday Detention. Am I clear? ”

Their terror filled silence was one of the most beautiful things I have ever heard.

Mrs. Berry looked at me, a smile back on her face. “If you need anything else, just call.”

“Oh don’t worry,” I smiled back as she walked towards the door. “I will!” I said the last part slightly louder, letting the threat settle in the class room.

A part of me knows that I should feel slightly ashamed that another teacher had to come in and help take care of my class. But I was too busy enjoying the superior looks being wiped off their faces to truly care.

The rest of class went off without another problem. They sat there and did there homework in a tense silence. When the bell rang that practically scurried out of the classroom.

Good Riddance!

My mom came into the class half way through third period much to my chagrin, “Heard you had some trouble first period.”

By this time Mrs. Berry had informed me, having talked to Coach Davis on the phone that the kids could eat in class- WHOOPS- So the students were munching and drinking happily while working on their assignments.

It seemed like Mrs. Berry talked to more than people than Coach Davis. Just Peachy.

“Yeah; apparently teenagers must have food or they become blood thirsty.”

She laughed, putting her hand on my shoulder and patting it affectionately. “I am glad it’s going better. And I have some news for you. It seems Coach Davis won’t be back until Tuesday. You wouldn’t mind subbing again would you?”

The horror stricken look that came across my face sent my mother into uproarious laughter.